

Tips for the Care and Feeding of Your Child's Brain

BRAIN-BUILDING FAMILY RECIPES

Dr. Linda Karges-Bone, a professor in the School of Education at Charleston Southern University, in Charleston, S.C., spoke to parents of children in Winter Park Consortium Schools recently about ways to raise smarter children.

The session was held at Glenridge Middle School and sponsored by Brookshire Elementary School with support from its Healthy School Team, Parent Teacher Association and the Whole Foods Market. Winter Park Health Foundation financial support helped make it possible.

Dr. Bone explained gender differences in the brain and discussed things parents can do to help nourish their child's brain and optimize learning.

Here are 10 of Dr. Bone's tips:

1. Make sure that your child gets adequate sleep. Teenagers actually need more sleep than younger children. Minimum: 8 hours.
2. Physical exercise pumps glucose and oxygen to your child's brain. A physically active child has a cognitively active brain.
3. Choose brain-friendly foods that boost energy, neural activity, "brain cleansing" and natural enhancement.
4. Keep stress to a minimum so that cortisol, the stress hormone, cannot attack the brain.
5. Use music to help the left side of the brain work more effectively.
6. Learn your child's preferred "learning style" and use it to assist with homework and projects.
7. Use scents such as peppermint and spearmint to keep children alert while they study and take tests.
8. Use bold-colored index cards and scented markers in your homework center to keep the brain alert. Keep flowers in the home environment to increase neural activity.
9. Create a language-rich environment. Provide lots of books. Good conversation. Read aloud to children daily. Words literally help to grow brain connections.
10. Avoid television and video games. They over-stimulate the right side of the brain and can contribute to ADD and other disorders.

Brain-Berry Smoothies

Ingredients:

- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 cup skim milk
- 1 cup fat free/sugar free any flavor yogurt

Directions:

Blend, serve and drink for 55 percent faster neural transmission!

Dr. Bone's Very Veggie Brain Soup

Ingredients:

- 3 cans low sodium chicken broth
- 1 can red kidney beans
- 1 can white beans
- 2 cups torn fresh spinach
- 2 Tbsp. chopped garlic
- 2 Tbsp chopped onion
- 1 cup shredded carrots
- 1 cup dry small pasta such as shells or ditalini

Directions:

In a deep soup pot combine the list of ingredients except for the dry pasta. Allow soup to simmer for 30 minutes. Add pasta during the last 10 minutes. Top with parmesan cheese before serving.

The recipes were provided by Dr. Linda Karges-Bone, a professor in the School of Education at Charleston Southern University, in Charleston, S.C. To learn more about Dr. Bone, go to www.educationinsite.com

For more healthy recipes—updated weekly—as well as news stories and tips focused on the health of children and families, go to www.healthykidstoday.org, a website developed and supported by the Winter Park Health Foundation.



Did You Know?

Each year, the Winter Park Health Foundation (WPHF) funds a collection of programs—part of the Coordinated Youth Initiative (CYI)—designed to help remove barriers to learning by caring for the physical and mental health of local students.

Programs are available in the 12 schools that make up the Winter Park Consortium of Schools (Winter Park High School and its elementary and middle feeder schools) and include the School Nursing Initiative, the Student Health Centers, the CHILL mental health professionals, Healthy School Teams (HST) and the healthykidstoday.org website.

Here's a brief refresher course on the free services available.

School Nursing Initiative

WPHF provides funding to Orange County Public Schools to hire licensed nurses to work in each school in the Winter Park Consortium of Schools. Licensed nurses are a luxury most schools can't afford.

School nurses provide health screening, prevention and health maintenance services, as well as emergency care.

Student Health Centers

In addition to the nurses available in each school, there are nurse practitioners based in the Student Health Centers at Glenridge Middle School and Winter Park High School who have master's degrees and are able to provide more advanced care.

The nurse practitioners can assess, diagnose and prescribe medications and therapies for patients. They also perform school and sports physicals. Their services, like all other CYI services, are available and free to all students enrolled in Consortium schools. Visits are available by appointment only.

CHILL (Community Help & Intervention in Life's Lessons)

CHILL is a free counseling program for students and their families. Under this program, operated by Healthcare Providers and Associates, and financially supported by WPHF, mental health counselors who

have a master's degree in social work, counseling, psychology or a related field, are assigned to each Consortium school.

CHILL counselors hold individual, group and family sessions, and also provide presentations to classes, staff and parents.

Healthy School Teams

Modeled after the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Coordinated School Health Program, Healthy School Teams are now a fixture in Consortium schools. The HSTs, assigned the task of planning programs for their schools that promote healthy lifestyles and behaviors, are made up of school staff, administrators, parents and even students.

HealthyKidsToday.org

Developed and maintained by the Foundation, the website provides complete information on all of the CYI programs as well as important health news, tips and healthy recipes updated weekly.

Call 2-1-1- for Help

The current unsettling economy can make it difficult for families to cope, but a call to the 2-1-1 free information and referral telephone service can connect you to community resources that can help.

Operated by Heart of Florida United Way and established through the support of the Winter Park Health Foundation, 2-1-1 includes information on 743 agencies throughout Central Florida. The top services requested focus on utility bill payment assistance, rent payment assistance, food pantries, transitional housing/shelter and community clinics.

For help, just dial 2-1-1. The service is free, confidential, multi-lingual, and available 24 hours a day.



Elementary School Edition

Healthy Kids Today

Parents Are Key in Helping Children Cope With Peer Abuse

Experts report it happening as early as pre-school

The "Queen Bees," the "Plastics" and the "Barbies"—nicknames for the self-appointed cool girls in any school—have strutted the hallways serving up torment for as long as there have been schools.

Few women don't wince at the memory of being victimized at one time or another, whether it involved being excluded from a cafeteria lunch table, not being invited to a party or being talked about in notes passed in a classroom.

Today's high tech tactics, that involve cell phones, text messaging and the Internet, have elevated the pain for victims to new heights.

And there is more of it than ever occurring at younger ages, as young as preschool, according to mental health experts. This makes it more

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Local Schools Focused on Winning Governor's Fitness Challenge

Winter Park Consortium elementary schools will all participate in Gov. Charlie Crist's newly announced 2007-2008 Governor's Fitness Challenge, an eight-week challenge which kicked off in March encouraging elementary school students and their schools to join in physical activity.

Participating schools have a chance to win \$5,000 or \$10,000 worth of sports or fitness equipment or a visit from a Florida professional athlete or Olympian. They also have the opportunity to be designated a "Governor's Fitness Champion School."

"The Winter Park Consortium/Coordinated Youth Initiative (CYI) elementary schools are perfectly

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important than ever for parents to know how they can help their daughters learn to cope.

Name calling, gossiping and exclusion are just a few examples of this type of behavior called "relational aggression." According to Dr. Nicki Crick, Director, Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota and a researcher on the subject, relational aggression is "emotional violence and bullying behaviors focused on damaging an individual's social connections within the peer group." It can happen once, or be repeated over and over. And it is the repetition that is of greatest concern.

Seen more commonly in girls than boys, relational aggression has short and long term consequences for both the person inflicting the pain and the victim, (as well as bystanders) including poor self esteem, feelings of powerlessness, loneliness, isolation, anger, depression, eating disorders, poor academic performance, suicidal thoughts, or at its most extreme—school violence.

It also can drive students to avoid school. The National Association of School Psychologists reports that 160,000 students each year fail to

attend school out of fear of relational aggression. The group estimates that 22 percent of children between fourth and eighth grades report academic difficulties due to peer abuse.

So what is going on?

Insecurity is underneath a lot of the bullying behavior. It is the fear of being different, said Aimee Jennings, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Coordinator of the CHILL mental health counseling program offered in Winter Park Consortium Schools through the support of the Winter Park Health Foundation.

Relational aggression is nothing new, but it is getting more attention now because there has been enough research to show that while some students move through this phase of development relatively unscathed, others will be hurt and in pain which could lead to problems like eating disorders, drug abuse or even suicide, said Sandee Nebel, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, who operates the White Picket Fence Counseling Center in Winter Park. She has spoken at a variety of area schools on the issues associated with relational aggression.

It affects both the bully and the bullied.

"Both parties need to learn appropriate ways of assertiveness, conflict resolution, empathy, and

other personal/social effectiveness insights and skills," according to the introduction to a recent conference on relational aggression held in Orlando.

The tough part for parents may be figuring out the best time and how to get involved, because girls may be friends one day, enemies the next and then friends again.

This makes it important to be a good listener—and observer. But many students say they don't want parents to go in and solve the issue. And when they do, experts say this gets in the way of kids learning how to cope on their own.

Parents naturally want to look for a way to remove pain from a child being teased at school and solve the problem. But it is important that parents not try to save the children, but instead help them find their own solutions, said Ms. Jennings. The problem-solving skills they develop will be with them for life.

Ms. Jennings also suggested parents help their children build self esteem and friendship skills. The American Girls series of books, which includes "A Smart Girl's Guide to Friendship Troubles," is helpful for elementary age girls.

Here are some other suggestions for parents contained in handouts provided at a recent conference on relational aggression held in Orlando.

- Let kids know they can always come to you. "Always be available to listen and talk to your child about what is going on in her life. Don't downplay the importance of an incident, empathize with your daughter when she shares something she sees as important.
- Teach kindness and model this behavior.
- If your daughter is the 'girl in the middle,' firmly but lovingly encourage her to take the high road and support the victim, or at least not take part in the aggression."

Ramey Wood, MA, CHILL Counselor at Maitland Middle School, added these other suggestions for parents:

- Help normalize the experience for the child and let her know that many other people at school are having similar experiences. Perhaps parents can share how they overcame similar experiences.
- It can be helpful to assist the child in identifying what "friend" means and what qualities she wants in a friend.
- Another thing parents can say is that often when people "bully" others it is because that person feels insecure and wants to fit in with others.

- Help the child identify a "safe place" or "safe person" at school to talk with (i.e. teacher or counselor) if needed.

Ms. Nebel pointed out it is also important for parents to model healthy behaviors. Parents who gossip a lot and talk about others negatively set a poor example.

She also suggested parents try to get their children involved in activities where they feel comfortable, such as a drama class, a sport, a church activity or volunteer opportunity. Helping others is a good way to build self esteem.

Self esteem, empathy and kindness are good tools for children to have to cope now and in the future.



RESOURCES

If you would like more information about relational aggression, contact the CHILL Counselor at your child's school. Here are other resources:

Books:

Don't Laugh at Me
by Steve Seskin and Allen Shamblin

My Secret Bully
by Trudy Ludwig

The Recess Queen
by Alexis O'Neill and Laura Huliska-Beith

Bullying in the Girl's World
by Diane Senn

Blue Cheese Breath and Stinky Feet
by Catherine DePino, Ed.D.

Websites:

www.girlsempowered.com

www.clubophelia.com

www.relationalaggression.com

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poised to set the standard for this challenge," said Debbie Watson, vice president, Winter Park Health Foundation.

"We've already been recognized by Gov. Crist for the work we are doing together with our school health programs," she said. "Now, the Governor's new Challenge gives us a chance to show him what we already do, can do, and what is possible in our schools when it comes to school wellness and student fitness," she added.

The eight-week program will run through early May and focus on five activities that can be completed during or after the school day. Participating schools commit to dedicate two 45-minute sessions or three 30-minute sessions per week for the duration of the Governor's Fitness Challenge so that students can work on the five activities of the Governor's Fitness Challenge or from a selection of other activities.

Watch for more information from your Healthy School Team Leaders and physical education teachers.

For more information, go to www.governorsfitnesschallenge.com



Choking Game Can be Deadly

Kids in Central Florida and around the country have experimented with the "Choking Game" which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in February said caused at least 82 deaths nationwide since 1995.

The game, known by a variety of names including the Pass Out Game, Airplaning, the Blackout Game and the Flatliner Game, involves children and teens choking each other or themselves to get a brief high, according to the CDC.

Participants either choke each other or use a noose to choke themselves, and after a short time, the participants can pass out which might lead to serious injury or even death from hanging or strangulation, CDC officials warn.

The game has been around for generations under different names, but in recent years the game has become more deadly as youths began to use ropes and belts as nooses and play the game alone. This has brought international attention, according to Games Adolescents Shouldn't Play (GASP), an international not-for-profit association formed to educate parents about the issue and put an end to the game.

Here are signs children may be involved in the choking game provided by the CDC:

- Discussion of the game or its aliases
- Bloodshot eyes

- Marks on the neck
- Wearing high-necked shirts, even in warm weather
- Frequent, severe headaches
- Disorientation after spending time alone
- Increased and uncharacteristic irritability or hostility
- Ropes, scarves, and belts tied to bedroom furniture or doorknobs or found knotted on the floor
- The unexplained presence of dog leashes, choke collars, bungee cords, etc.
- Petechiae (pinpoint bleeding spots) under the skin of the face, especially the eyelids, or the conjunctiva (the lining of the eyelids and eyes)

Health officials say it is essential that parents talk to children about the dangers of the game. They should explain that each time the child plays the game, he or she risks the death of brain cells or themselves.

If the child is participating in the game, health officials recommend parents alert parents of children's friends and alert school staff such as the nurse or counselor, because it is likely more than one student will be involved.

For further information, contact the CHILL Counselor at your school.

